Sustainable Fisheries GIT Executive Committee
Meeting Minutes

July 20, 2020 1:00 - 3:00pm

Participants:

Sean Corson	Mike Wilberg	Marty Gary	Mike Bednarski
Stephanie Westby	Bob Beal	Kim Couranz	Brooke Goggins
Ward Slacum	Pat Geer	Sara Coleman	Angie Sowers
Mandy Bromilow			

- **Oyster Gear Comparison Report**
  - Ward Slacum (ORP) presented a recent study that examined patent tong efficiency in estimating oyster density on restored reefs in Harris Creek.
    - Conducted diver surveys on oyster reefs that were patent tonged for restoration monitoring to examine differences in density estimates
    - Patent tong (PT) efficiency was 30% on average; diver density estimates were 3.4x higher than PT on average
      - Disagrees with previous study (Chai et al. 1992) that found not significant difference between PT and diver sampling efficiencies
      - Possibly due to undisturbed nature of restored reefs; Chai et al. sampled on harvest reefs
    - Limited body of research available to compare results and draw conclusions
      - Need more comparisons of gear efficiency (paired sampling with divers and PT)
  - Discussion:
    - Recent MD oyster bill states that restoration requires use of substrate that maximizes oyster density. What might group recommend in terms of alternative substrate? Does this report influence thinking on this?
      - This study did not examine differences in density estimates across substrate types, can't make statement of relative performance
      - Unclear if the difference in density estimates is due to substrate, reef height, or a gear effect – would need to tease this out with further studies
      - Schulte et al. 2018 estimated 70% tong efficiency in VA
        - May be due to differences in the oyster populations (spat presence) and gear used (mechanical tongs)

- Could compare oyster density on two different reef types after correcting for efficiency, but should not make the comparisons on reefs outside Harris Creek; adds too many confounding factors
- How does this report affect oyster assessment/monitoring in the Bay?
    - Use of PT survey data in the MD stock assessment is limited
        - MD uses model with data from PT and dredge surveys
    - Should consider how oyster density and substrate type affect gear efficiency
        - Would like to see more work done here to determine best practices for monitoring
    - Use of PT is potentially more problematic in VA where oyster densities are higher and the survey data are relied upon more heavily in the stock assessment
        - VA assessment calculates oyster biomass from corrected PT density estimates
- Need to keep in mind that factors such as interstitial space may be driving substrate performance
- Availability of and access to materials should also be considered when advising future efforts

➢ **Invasive Catfish Management Strategy Update**

- Mandy sent the management strategy and management approach matrix to the jurisdictions
    - *Action: Send Mandy completed matrix*
- Jurisdictions are obtaining feedback on the management strategy from advisory committees
    - *Action: Sean will follow up with jurisdictions on the timeline for final approval*

➢ **Member Updates**

- ASMFC is holding its quarterly meeting the week of August 3. Key topics include the striped bass rebuilding program and adoption of menhaden ERPs.
- ASMFC continues to work with the CARES Act to provide relief to fisheries interests.
- Margaret Whitmore has filled the Tidal River Project Leader position at VDWR (formerly VDGIF).

➢ **Next Meeting is August 24 1:00-3:00pm**